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HIGH-SCHOOL OBSERVATION WORK

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The doctrine that theory and practice ought never to be wholly separated is as old at least as the writings of Plato. No less an authority than William James has also declared that impressions can leave no complete or accurate imprints in human consciousness nor abide there permanently even in distorted forms unless they have worked themselves out in some kind of expressional response. Nevertheless, despite the teachings of ancient philosophy and modern psychology much, if not most, of the classroom instruction in high school and college today stops short with the theoretical, ideational, or impressional side of education and neglects almost entirely the expressional aspects involved in drill and in application to real life-situations. The results are that large numbers of our youths are yearly passed through our schools without any adequate mastery of the subject-matter they have studied, with little real appreciation of its import or value in making life-adjustments, and with exceedingly limited powers of actually applying school knowledge to the problems of the world's work.

Of all the divisions of the school system the college of liberal arts has doubtless failed most notably in motivating in a practical way its instruction. Indeed to do so would run counter to the very aims and purposes which, historically considered, have given rise to this type of educational institution. Knowledge for knowledge's sake has for ages been its slogan. The leading factor in justification of the teaching of any given subject within its walls has been its claim to practical uselessness. In consequence one of two policies has always dominated in the administration of the work of this school, namely, (1) to prevent so far as possible the admission of such subject-matter and such methods of instruction as smack of the utilitarian, the professional, the art of doing, or (2) (whenever these tendencies have later developed and become

prominent within any given field of knowledge) to permit the withdrawal of the department of study from the fold of the college of liberal arts and the establishment of a separate and distinct school for itself. That is to say, each subject as it has developed a tendency to depart from the more formal aspect of instruction has been checked and hampered by the administrators of co-ordinate departments so long as it was possible to check and hamper its re-formation and reorganization, and then, when the pressure of internal expansion has become too great to withstand, conservative hands have been lifted entirely and the former partner in liberal culture has been allowed to go its own way—though not always in peace or with a blessing.

So it has happened that law, medicine, and theology have, from early days, boldly made good their claim to a separate existence as schools in a university, and have sought openly to provide an education that includes drill, practice, and direct correlation with the world at large. So it has happened that more recently the work in engineering, architecture, forestry, and chemistry has either been set off from the college of liberal arts and organized in separate colleges or schools, or has been given a quasi-independence which is obviously merely the forerunner of complete separation.

The task of educating or training teachers in colleges and universities has for the last forty years been slowly passing through a like process of evolution. For generations normal schools for the professional training of teachers for the elementary schools have enjoyed a separate existence and have received, in general, public approval and support. They have even been accorded recognition—grudgingly, perchance—in academic circles and by collegiate and university authorities. The professional training of secondary-school teachers has, however, till recently (and to a large degree even today) been vehemently opposed by these same individuals and powers. That teachers in the college of liberal arts should themselves be expected to undergo professional training of a sort that teachers in the lower schools or indeed in the higher and distinctively professional schools undergo would no doubt, if advocated before them, produce little but contemptuous laughter. For most of these the assertions that “teachers are born, not made,”

and that "whoever knows his subject can teach it," are irrefutable and final arguments that dispose, so it is sometimes held, once and for all time of the reformer who demands of both high-school and college teachers a knowledge and training in the principles, theories, and processes of the pedagogical art. By most of these academicians the admission of a department of education into the charmed circle of the college of liberal arts has been persistently opposed or, once admitted, has been as persistently attacked as being innocuous and useless. Every effort at expansion and extension of power and efficiency on the part of the department of education has in many colleges met with positive faculty disapproval—if not complete defeat. The motives of professors of education have often been challenged and their action viewed with suspicion. Public clamor for better-prepared teachers in secondary schools and colleges has frequently been scouted as "manufactured and exploited by departments of education themselves," and treated therefore as representing no true or real popular demand.

Although approximately 50 per cent of the graduates of the college of liberal arts in the coeducational universities and colleges of the land enter, temporarily at least, upon the career of teaching, the standpat group of individuals in these colleges strenuously opposes pedagogical extension that shall include adequate observational and practice work for the prospective young teachers, but, still more illogically, objects to the complete separation of the department of education from the college of liberal arts and the establishment of a school and organization of its own. The fear in the first instance seems to be that new and additional inroads will be made into the time-honored total of 120 hours of so-called liberal culture; the fear in the second case is the entire loss to the liberal arts college of more than half of the each year's Senior class. Above all else the enemies of professional training for teachers seem to object to the development and encouragement of any agency which by reason of its free discussions of contemporary aims, values, and processes of instruction tends to bring old educational customs and beliefs into ill-repute and to raise the demand that each department of learning shall ceaselessly bring its own practices into question and to reform itself.

Nevertheless, despite the concerted opposition of influential groups within college faculties, the professional training of teachers—particularly of teachers in secondary schools—has in recent years gone on apace. Departments of education have themselves recognized the inconsistencies and imperfections under which they in the past have been organizing and administering their work and have striven persistently to correct weaknesses and to make good deficiencies. Taking their cues from the moot courts of the law schools, the clinics of the medical schools, the shop and laboratory work of the colleges of engineering, dentistry, forestry, and chemistry, and the field excursions of the departments of geology, biology, and other sciences, the faculties of the departments of education have sought to provide like facilities for their students.

The observation of superior teaching carried forward under normal secondary-school conditions and the opportunity to engage under supervision in practice teaching itself have therefore come to prevail as ideals in the professional training of all young novitiates of the teaching corps. Wherever circumstances are warranting the establishment of a separate and distinct demonstration and practice school under the complete control of the university and the immediate supervision and direction of the school or department of education, that type of organization has in most cases been preferred and adopted. Wherever circumstances have been such as to prevent the establishment of a separate school or have made its establishment seem unwise or not feasible, resort has not infrequently been had to the plan of utilizing the existing local public high school as a pedagogical laboratory. Obviously, however, wherever college departments of education are large and the local public high school is relatively small, facilities for practice teaching must necessarily be wholly inadequate to accommodate all who seek the privilege—if indeed it is feasible or possible to provide such facilities for any of them. Under such circumstances the local high school can doubtless best be brought into co-operation with the university if it opens its doors to pupil-training classes for observational privileges only.

The manner, too, of conducting observation work of this kind must vary greatly among the several institutions which undertake

it. Local conditions alone must guide. The form and administration of the work must be determined by the number and size of the several groups of students seeking observational privileges, by the departments of study in the local high school available for observation, by the students' class schedules in other departments of university work, by the program of recitations in operation in the high school, and by many other contingent factors.

In order to present the problem of observation work somewhat more concretely, an outline of the plan in vogue at the University of Michigan is herewith attached. The writer is somewhat more conversant with this plan than with any other, since it has been his pleasure to have general supervision of its administration for the last two years.

In order also to judge fairly the plan of operation at Michigan, the following facts should be kept in mind, namely: Pedagogical work at Michigan is organized as a department of learning within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; five professors give full time to the work; there is no practice or demonstrational school under control of the University; pedagogical courses are open only to students of Junior, Senior, or graduate standing, and the "observational work" is open to none below the rank of Senior; eleven semester hours in Education are the maximum number that can (by rule of the faculty) be required for a teacher's diploma and certificate, and hence this number of hours represents the amount of professional work usually pursued by prospective teachers. Approximately 250 Seniors annually seek the teacher's diploma.

The following additional facts will further help to make clear the local situation: The Ann Arbor city high school (in which observation privileges for university students are provided) enrolls approximately 700 pupils and employs 25 teachers. Sixteen teachers selected from among the eight departments of English, Latin, German, French, history, mathematics, biology, and physics are, by agreement, subject to observational visits by university students throughout *one semester*. Each student is required to observe twenty recitation periods distributed among these teachers.

In addition to the concrete observational work at the high school eight sections in special methods (distributed over the same fields

of study as the observational work) are organized in the University itself. Each section is under the direction of a professor chosen from the special department concerned. The sections meet once a week, and the time is occupied with discussions of the principles of special instructional methods, student reports of observational visits, and analyses and solutions of pertinent queries and criticisms.

It is seen therefore (to summarize the facts) that all special-methods courses are two-headed, one aspect centering in twenty observational visits in the local city high school, the other centering in twenty university class meetings devoted to discussion of methods. Although these discussion meetings are in charge of professors not directly connected with the department of education, that department assumes general supervision of the work and indeed places the entire direction of the observational-method courses in the charge of one of its own staff. Credit gained by the successful pursuit of the work is, moreover, recorded as credit in education. The amount allowed is *one* hour.

To illustrate the character of the university end of the work the following excerpt taken from the annual announcement of courses is inserted:

4d. Observation and Special Methods in History.—Th., at 1:00. Room 105, T.H. PROFESSOR DAVIS.

Lectures, conferences, reports, readings, and discussions.

The aim of this course is to give inexperienced but prospective teachers of history an opportunity to study the special problems of the classroom and to consider the special aspects of methods involved in history teaching in secondary schools. The work will consist of lectures and exercises dealing with such topics as the aims of history teaching; the relation of history to literature, biography, and science; the sequence of the various divisions of the subject; the proportionate emphasis to be accorded different phases of history; the organization of material; the use of textbooks and notebooks; the use of outlines, maps, charts, blackboards, reference books, source material, pictures, lantern slides, and other illustrative helps; tests and examinations; reports and reviews; lesson planning; types of recitation; the art of questioning; assignment of lessons, and other topics involving the technique of the recitation.

Each student will be required to spend twenty hours during the semester observing the classroom work in the Ann Arbor High School.

The announcements of the other method courses are similar.

The administration of the concrete observational parts of the entire plan falls into four categories and may be formulated as follows:

1. A joint preliminary conference of the university professors responsible for the university class discussions and the entire body of high-school teachers whose work is to be observed. This meeting is under the direction of the professor in charge of the work as a whole. The meeting concerns itself with a discussion of purposes and plans for administering the work as a whole.

2. A preliminary two-hour meeting of each university observation group taken as a unit (English group, Latin group, etc.) with the principal of the high school and the teachers respectively teaching the subject-matter in which the particular student group is specializing. One portion of this two-hour period is devoted to a talk by the principal, outlining the general plan of the organization of the school, the class schedules, the most convenient modes of ingress and egress, the exactions that must be required of students in making observational visits, and similar pertinent topics. The entire group is then conducted over the building and made familiar with the location of classrooms, laboratories, session-rooms, cloakrooms, and the like, and incidentally have their attention called to the most satisfactory features of the structure, arrangement, and plan of the building as a whole.

The second portion of this first group-observation period is devoted to a general analysis by the teachers of the special subject concerned of the aims which they set themselves in the teaching of their courses, the general plan of organization of the departmental work, the general character of each course being offered that particular semester, the textbooks to be used, the usual daily routine, the larger features of method to be followed, the mode of testing pupils and keeping records, and what general co-operation is expected of the student observer.

3. Eighteen additional definitely scheduled observations of full sixty minutes each allotted in the following manner: (*a*) Several "general observations" distributed over as many types of class work within the field of specialization as opportunity permits. The purpose here is to observe as many kinds of work as possible—work

varying in respect to grade (first, second, third, fourth) and also in respect to teachers. (b) Two or more "consecutive observations" of the same class or classes. The aim here is to observe a lesson assigned and then the following day the manner in which the assignment is worked out. (c) A "group observation" wherein the same high-school recitation period is observed by the entire group of students whose specialty lies within that field. The purpose of this observation is to provide identical data for the basis of group analyses later. (d) Five or more "distributed observations" among five or more teachers hitherto not observed, who are teaching subjects not lying in the field of the university student's special interest. The object of this form of observation is to discover *by contrast* elements of good teaching applicable to one's special field. (e) Two "corrective observations" wherein the student reobserves the teachers who are teaching the subjects of his major interest. The idea here is that, having observed five or more types of teaching outside the realm of his specialty, the student, by means of the later observations, corrects his previous impressions respecting the teachers of his specialty. (f) A final "summarizing hour" wherein the entire observation group meets as at the outset of the work, but now for the purpose of receiving summarizing advice from the teachers observed, propounding such questions as seem pertinent, and formulating for themselves a unified ideal of the instructional methods to be used when placed in charge of a classroom themselves.

4. In addition to the actual observations made and the weekly university class discussions held each student is expected to keep a well-classified notebook in which he records his observations and his reactions. At the end of the entire observational period a term thesis based on these notes and containing approximately 3,000 words is demanded.

A clearer conception of the more detailed processes involved in the administration of the plan sketched above can, perhaps, best be had by a perusal of the complete mimeographed *Outline* which is followed. A copy of this *Outline* is placed in the hands of each student observer, high-school teacher, and college professor concerned with the work, and hence a basis for standardization is secured. The *Outline* is as follows:

AN OUTLINE FOR CONDUCTING HIGH-SCHOOL OBSERVATION COURSES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, 1917

C. O. DAVIS, IN CHARGE

Office Hours: Room 102, T.H. Daily at 11:00

- I. A conference of the high-school teachers and the university instructors shall be held prior to the observation assignments at an hour to be arranged.
- II. The first observation to be made shall be made by each university class as a body at the time (and in lieu) of its *second* university class-period scheduled for the week of February 19-23. Each group will be escorted over the high-school building and aided in getting bearings and general impressions; at 4:00 o'clock each group will meet the high-school teachers designated to be observed and receive from them preliminary advice and suggestions. This discussion shall include announcements concerning:
 1. Class schedules
 2. Textbooks used
 3. Size of classes and grade of work
 4. Equipment used and its arrangement
 5. Organization of the work in each course taught
 6. Aims of each course definitely formulated
 7. Scope of work to be covered during the semester
 8. Usual daily routine
 9. Variations from routine to be expected
 10. Mode of keeping records
 11. Mode of testing
 12. Fundamental principles of discipline used
 13. What is expected of the student observer

University instructors are invited to accompany classes on this first visit to the high school, and are urged to be present at the 4:00 o'clock hour at least.

III. Organization of the observation work:

1. Introductory observation (as described above) by entire class. Week, February 19-23. Observation credits, 2.
2. General observation of teachers of major subjects. Four hours on four separate days and in four different classes. Two weeks, February 23-March 9. Observation credits, 4.
3. Consecutive observation. Two hours on two consecutive days in the same two classes. Two weeks, March 12-23. Observation credits, 4.
4. Group observation. The entire class accompanied by the university instructor to observe a special class recitation called at the hour of the usual university class meeting. Discussions to follow, led by the high-school teachers. Two weeks, March 26-April 6. Observation credits, 2. The responsible administrators of each department concerned shall be free to omit this observation hour (if circumstances

make its omission desirable) and substitute therefor *two* additional consecutive observations.

5. Distributed observations. Five hours with five teachers not previously observed. Three weeks, April 16—May 4. Observation credits, 5.
6. Corrective observation. Two hours with teachers of the major subject. Week, May 7—11. Observation credits, 2.
7. Summarizing hour, the entire class meeting together (at an hour to be arranged) with the teachers of the major subjects. Week, May 14—18. Observation credits, 1.

IV. Administration of observation:

1. No credit for the course shall be granted unless *all* observation hours are completed *as outlined*.
2. Students shall be assigned hours for observation after consultation with Professor C. O. Davis *one* week before each observation period, and *not more than five students* shall observe the same teacher at the same hour.
3. Each student shall be required to hand in, *in duplicate*, to the teacher in charge of the room observed each hour, cards giving the following data:
 - a) Student name
 - b) Date: day of month—, week—, hour—.
 - c) Teacher observed
 - d) Topic of day
 - e) Subject observed
 - f) Question (if any)
4. Students shall be required to keep notebooks with topic headings and to list observations appropriately under *each* heading *each* observation. The headings are as follows:
 - a) Physical conditions and equipment
 - b) Routine factors of administration
 - c) Instances of discipline—causes, treatment, result
 - d) Factors producing school solidarity
 - e) Lesson assignments
 - f) The recitation
 - (1) Preparation, i.e., review of past work and statement of present lesson aims
 - (2) Presentation, i.e., mode of advance and choice of material
 - (3) Association, i.e., clarifying, illustrating, comparing
 - (4) Generalization, i.e., summarizing and unifying
 - (5) Application, i.e., correlating with life-interests and testing
 - g) Helping pupils to study
 - h) The teacher's personality
 - i) Miscellaneous observations
 - j) Personal comments, questions, reflections

5. Students shall be required at the end of the course to present a thesis of 3,000 words, based on notes taken during the observations.
6. Students shall be provided with outlines and suggestive questions to guide them in observing.
7. Students are urged, some time during the semester, to visit the normal school at Ypsilanti, the high schools in Jackson, Detroit, Chelsea, Ypsilanti, or other nearby towns.
8. University instructors are to be free to conduct the university work as judgment dictates, but are expected to observe the following standards:
 - a) Attend a joint conference of the high-school teachers before the observation work is inaugurated.
 - b) Accompany (if convenient) the class on its first visit of observation, and certainly to attend the high-school teachers' introductory discussion and the group-observation hour during the first and fourth observation division outlined.
 - c) Meet the class weekly.
 - d) Seek as fully as possible to articulate and to co-ordinate the high-school and the university aspects of the course.
 - e) Require of students such written reports of the observation work as shall seem appropriate, but shall at least require the one thesis provided for above in this outline.
 - f) Hold a conference of students during the last portion of the course and invite students to propound (preferably in written forms) such pertinent questions as may occur to them.

V. Suggestions to students—what to look for:

1. Physical conditions and equipment: size of building; structure; arrangement of stairs; halls, offices, classrooms, restrooms, laboratories, shops, toilets, drinking fountains, principal's office, other offices; auditorium, session-rooms, gymnasiums, baths, lunchrooms; decoration of halls, session-rooms, classrooms; library facilities; classroom equipment; blackboards; fire escapes; lawn decoration; playgrounds.
2. General organization: size of school; number of teachers; number periods per day; length of class-periods; average number of pupils in class; length of school year; program of studies; units prescribed each year; units prescribed for graduation; curricula.
3. Routine factors of administration: conduct of pupils before school opens; passing of classes; signal bells; treatment of cases of tardiness and absence; session-room rules; assembly periods; provisions for "making up work"; stated review-periods; written tests; examinations; seating pupils; taking attendance in classroom; handling material; getting started with the recitation hours; closing the recitation hour.
4. The human element: duties exercised by the superintendent over the high school; the principal; heads of departments; ratio of men and

women teachers; teachers' personal qualities (vigor, poise, neatness, force, dress, manner, voice, enthusiasm, sympathy, tact, system, temper, grace, winsomeness, energy, dignity, humor, positiveness, sarcasm, business-like, stimulation, fairness, patience, egotism, kindness, firmness, slow, rude, nervous, etc.); pupils (age, size, degree of physical maturity, evidences of physical abnormalities, evidences of ill-health, aggressiveness, good manners, self-confidence, slyness, boldness, indifference, mental alertness, initiative, accuracy, thoroughness, perseverance, obedience, social adaptation, co-operation, truthfulness, etc.).

5. The recitation:

- a) Aim: What is each teacher trying to accomplish? Is the aim clear to all? Is it formulated in words? Was the work of the day centered in this aim? Was the aim worth while? Was the aim achieved?
- b) Content: Was the content adapted to the aim? to the pupils? Was there discrimination shown in emphasizing topics? Did the material have true social value? Were details subordinated to general notions or principles? Was the lesson choppy or correlated? Was the encyclopedic tendency noticeable? Was the lesson too long? too short?
- c) Methods: Was the teacher herself well prepared? Was she tied to the text? What incentives or inducements did she use to get interest? Did she "drive too fast or too slowly"? What place was given to setting models or ideals to copy? Was emphasis properly distributed over drill, discussion, criticism, interpretation, exposition, application, summary, and assignment? Was the questioning well done? (Give some questions that were used.) Was the class kept together in the thought-processes? How were errors corrected? How was the ill-prepared student dealt with? How was illustrative material introduced? Was more than one sense appealed to, viz.: visual, audile, tactile, motor? Was there any "taking of stock" as the lesson proceeded? What use was made of instinctive factors of attention? Was a proper summary made? Were pupils led to abstract general principles from the facts dealt with? What means were used to make associations permanent and easy to recall? Did the pupils seem satisfied with the day's work? Did they have a "good time" in a thoroughly pedagogical manner? Did pupils take notes? Did the teacher "talk too much"? Was there any "demonstration" work by the teacher before the class as a whole? Were textbook definitions insisted upon? Was the conduct of the recitation thoroughly satisfactory to you?
- d) The assignment: How and when was this made? Was it adequate? Was it clear and definite? Was the problem element used in it? Was the "continued story" idea used? Were proper associations suggested? Was any special way of attacking the assignment given? Were pupils shown how to study? Was a model or example set for them? Did the teacher take individual differences into account, and if so, how?